

# Backbone Organization Roles

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## Guide Vision & Strategy

### *Green - Most Important*

- Clarity on vision – really talk it out & be clear
- Influence & support the conditions, perceptions, attitudes of social change
- What's important changes - It depends on the stage you're at in the process
- Inter-related most Important
  - Vision
  - Aligned activities
  - Public Will
- Re: vision & aligned activities – knowing when to push to the next level; commit to action
- Guide Vision & Strategy
  - Common understanding of reality
  - Same “issue” different understanding
- Move towards #6 strategically
- Depends on the stage of development and the issue – to know when to emphasize which role
- Guide & maintain re-look at vision & strategy
- All are important must have all in place to make change
- 1 & 3 are most important when you are starting...must be a collective group effort to decide “buy-in” & “participation”
- Listen to everybody's opinions but stay focused
- Humility
- Holding the vision
- Finding the aspirational common agenda
- Visionary
- A common vision and set of values (not strategies, all but some common value) strategies

### *Red – Most Challenging*

- Partnership IS sexy, but in-fighting & lack of trust IS present (Guide Strategy)
- Single vision for communities
- Preventing mission drift in the face of changing world conditions
- Using effective communication for a variety of stakeholders
- Succession of people
- Most difficult: guide vision & strategy
  - Change management
  - Paradigm shift
  - Time-consuming
  - Beating you head hard to get people's head around it
  - All staff/board @ backbone working towards the same vision (holding vision)
  - Egos
  - Cyclical process of the work

## ***Yellow – New Additions***

- Define the problem – part of guiding vision & strategy
- Define or frame the vision & principles in a simple & clear
- Communication – Could it be its own role?
- Communication is key to sharing the vision & keeping stakeholders informed
- Remove power from the backbone organization. They have nothing to gain from the collaboration. Totally in the background

# **Support Aligned Activities**

## ***Green - Most Important***

- Mobilize partners to be agents of change
- Build capacity among leaders

## ***Red – Most Challenging***

- Changing current community culture (competition, survival)
- Support Aligned activities – in making partnership NOT a threat
- Integration – pacing aligned activities across issue areas & capacity...how fast can we push out of silos?
- Aligning activities involves trust (relationship over a long period of time)
- Engaging the community to find out what the priorities are
- Unique to each situation
- Big step to go deeper in each organization – align “their” activities with the “collective”
- High turn-over; hard to keep lines of communication open

## ***Yellow – New Additions***

- Common language & understanding
- Connector! – it’s the central nervous system (gathering, sharing, interpreting) creativity & situational
- How do you engage people from diverse backgrounds & sectors
- Catalyzing, connecting, communicating, coordinating
- We need to shift our thinking about the backbone as an isolated/siloed entity. Collective impact means that everyone has a role to play
- Having a clear decision-making process (internally & with partners)
- Awareness, skill, capacity to create environment/spaces....multi-modal learning & communication

# **Establish Shared Measurement Practices**

## ***Green – Most Important***

- Getting organizations to agree when they fear that results may make them look bad
- Need that hard evidence to show change
- Accountability is key in the outcome....transparency in the measure
- A practice of shared measurement
- Independent 3<sup>rd</sup> party research
- Funder can play a role here in supporting organizations to develop this together

## ***Red – Most Challenging***

- How to support smaller less resourced partners through data systems
- Shared accountability – How do we measure change? Need to consider that partners have different funders with different agendas & expectations
- Shared measurement is a resource that costs! How do we help them mobilize funding (takes time) want to keep motivated; smaller groups need support to do this – EQUITY!
- Need more data & shared measurement
- Time it – the time it takes to get there
- Shared measurement...especially because we are all measuring so much solo

## ***Yellow – New Additions***

- Evaluate the process AND the outcomes
- Manage/synthesize and share feedback while supporting culture of learning from mistakes
- Developing a culture of reflective practice
- More well-rounded Leaders with an all-inclusive skill set
- Recognize that measurement is both process and outcome
- Research role (either provide directly or through third-party partnerships – e.g. Universities)
- Learning from the gaps –
  - Self-awareness from outset and continuous improvements
- Sharing and disseminating knowledge
- Clearing house for Data – constant communication
- Common ownership of research that all groups can access
- Recognize iterative process and learn from failure

# **Build Public Will**

## ***Green - Most Important***

- Continuous communications & the infrastructure to support it
- Building & maintaining trusting relationships
- Relationship Building
- Partner with other backbone organizations
- Communication: making sure information is shared broadly
- Moving away from hierarchy and empowering the front line
- What is the low-hanging fruit to keep people motivated
- Guiding the vision: must have people together to develop
- Building public will re: poverty reduction...cultural values & attitudes are challenging to shift
- Work with evidence but won't move forward if not approved by council who funds the backbone

## ***Red – Most Challenging***

- Relationship building
- People make it happen. A person with a team will give the foot-hold; 6 months-1 year; someone to motivate the public and generate the movement
- Building the public will of the community
- Long-term investment with short-term accountability; communication & public will...measurements to mobilize public will
- Community choosing the backbone organization
- Trust
- Change in public will every 4 years...communicating purpose

### ***Yellow – New Additions***

- Put public will FIRST...What is a community conversation anyway?
- Building public will versus Institutional will
- Identify the other people (non-traditional partners) who are not part and bringing them to the table – outreach strategy
- Peer support to break isolation

## **Advance Policy**

### ***Green - Most Important***

- Moves towards funding if vision and not change in policy difficult to implement

### ***Red – Most Challenging***

- Fractured policy landscape
- Federal policy agendas inaccessible
- Connecting the municipal, provincial & federal policy agendas
- A lot of work, a lot of time, levels of government are in silos
- Capacity to engage in public policy/policy change
- Absorb information in order to start changing a system

### ***Yellow – New Additions***

- No contributions here...

## **Mobilize Funding**

### ***Green - Most Important***

- Shift from mobilizing funding to mobilizing the resources - \$ is not an issue....having the right people in the role. Without good staff you will never develop success

### ***Red – Most Challenging***

- It's challenging as a funder to fund the "unknown" hard to take a risk....."shareholder" funds
- Get funders to think outside the box & invest in collective impact
- Get funders to talk to each other
- Disunity on the ground and limited resources to scale up to policy work
- Staging/ordering the roles (phasing the work)
- Vision versus mandates...funders for a collective vision
- Gain & maintain funding -- all resources can't be in-kind; mediate between competing groups
- Particularly important to engage the private sector

### ***Yellow – New Additions***

- Resource sharing to avoid duplication

# Other Roles

## ***Green - Most Important***

- Hard to identify what is more important – most important role is where you start based on your strengths...then move into other areas
- All roles are critical if we must pick.....guiding vision & mobilizing resources
- Ability to spot and nurture the talent to make it happen
- Support organizations to navigate systems
- Organic growth – ability for leaders to “pass the torch” when it gets to the next stage
- Ability to understand and value the roles of potential partners; ability to leverage

## ***Red – Most Challenging***

- Managing the unintended consequences (and the reverse)
- Not a linear process; more like a kaleidoscope or a hologram...but for some there is comfort with linear...so how do you move them beyond this?
- Risk-taking...The courage to e and do differently...liberation
- Brokering partnerships between government, industry and social benefit
- All of them
- Embedding knowledge into organizations
- The challenge is ensuring that the backbone has the hard and soft skills to carry out the 6 key leadership roles
- What happens when there is a shift in leadership?
- When differing groups “heel in” – take a stance with own strategies
- Continuum – ability to keep it going – build on progress

## ***Yellow – New Additions***

- In the “cajoling” business
- Be innovative and bold: promote collaborative culture and make it okay to experiment & fail
- Capacity Building:
  - building relationships
  - coaching & supporting
  - succession planning (leadership)
  - educating
  - providing tools, shared learning experiences
  - building the emotional intelligence of the group
- Capacity-building:
  - Evaluation
  - Knowledge mobilization
  - Share best practices
  - Leadership skills
- Genuine manager, convenor & facilitator
- Stuck on the idea of “organization” as entity/identity...often backbone roles are within different organizations that come together before it goes into a formal structure that is a single organization that IS institutionalized
- Build/develop shared leadership, recognizing that it slows the RPM but builds the sustainability
- Celebrating successes – being cheerleaders & acknowledging where we have come from
- Addition of “Learning & Sharing” as a backbone activity

- Support adaptive, flexible progress
- Leading ongoing reflection of role clarification and leadership development...recognize the leadership dynamic
- Partnership management role
- Relentless persistence; diplomatic, clarity; the coxswain who steers the ship; maintaining the direction of collective impact; staying focused on the goal
- A nurturing type of role – helping people align, getting them to the point of shared vision etc...It's more than just facilitation
- Patience
- Not just roles but vocabulary to describe collective impact...It needs to be positive, intentional & balanced
- Suggestions for backbone table (pg. 41) – Assumes a hierarchy/important in table format; consider creating a relationship map
- Having the ability to prioritize; What are the low-hanging fruit to keep people engaged and have those results which run in parallel to the system change
- The role of keeping the work on track & focused
- Civic Leadership & partnership
- Backbone organization as “translator” – talking the language of all the partners
- Host not just activities but host the process
- Focus more clearly on governance
- An agreement to clearly define the roles & expectations whether a Memorandum of Understanding or within the by-laws of the organization. Terms of reference may be an option. This depends on the size & the purpose (other idea – a team charter)
- The applicability of these roles in an international context